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Negotiating the 'I' and the 'We'

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Negotiating the 'I' and the 'We': aspects of modernism in the exile novels of Anna Gmeyner and Martina Wied

In her monograph *Jüdin und Moderne* Godela Weiss-Sussex sets out to discover German-language texts by Jewish women writers of the early twentieth century such as Else Croner, Auguste Hauschner, Grete Meisel-Hess and Elisabeth Landau, and to examine them in relation to what she calls three key questions of modernity for German-Jewish women writers: German-Jewish identity, gender concepts and the experience of urban life.¹ The texts at the heart of this study, *Café du Dôme* by Anna Gmeyner and *Das Krähenest* [The Crow's Nest] by Martina Wied,² were written and published later than the texts Weiss-Sussex focuses on; they were written between the late 1930s and 1945 rather than during the period 1900 to 1918. Both novels were written after their authors had to flee to Britain from Germany and Austria because of their Jewish background and due to the National Socialist takeover. Thus the key questions for the German-born or rather in this case Austrian-born Jewish women writers had changed; Jewish and gender identity and gender concepts were still significant but now the experience of the political changes in Europe, National Socialism and exile were reflected in the novels.. Both Gmeyner and Wied can be seen as part of a continuity of German-language Jewish women writers' engagement with modernity ('Moderne') but here I will argue that their works are successful examples of a European modernism, in which aesthetic techniques and political focus were combined to produce a complex representation of social changes and the new possibilities that emerged even in the face of National Socialism and exile.

In *Crisis and Criticism*, first published in 1937, Alick West identified the question facing modernist writers in the interwar period: 'When I do not know any longer who are the "we" to whom I belong, I do not know any longer who "I" am either.'³ This 'crisis' is the one faced by Gmeyner and Wied, who, in exile, tried to express complex issues surrounding consciousness, the self and group identities. Although there are obviously differences between the two novels in theme and style, I will show that there are strong similarities in dealing with identity and belonging and how this is 'performed' in both novels. This includes elements of modernist techniques such as stream-of-consciousness, the fantastic, unstable identities and performativity. It is my intention to show that *Café du Dôme* and *Das*

¹ Godela Weiss-Sussex, *Jüdin und Moderne: Literarisierung der Lebenswelt deutsch-jüdischer Autorinnen in Berlin (1900-1918)*, Berlin 2016, p. 2.

² Anna Gmeyner, *Café du Dôme*, London 1941; Martine Wied, *Das Krähenest*, Vienna 1951.

³ Alick West, *Crisis and Criticism and Selected Literary Essays*, London 1975, p. 19.

Krähenest are part of Jewish women writers' contribution to European modernism rather than works that can only be examined under the heading 'exile writing'. This is possible because there are many facets of both novels that have been given insufficient attention but also because of the fact that modernism has evolved as a concept. Sean Latham and Gayle Rogers speak of 'modernisms' in response to the 'variety of historical, literary, cultural and other forces that created a global twentieth century modernity'.⁴ Recently scholars have explored other non-canonical contributions to modernism. Nick Hubble argues in *The Proletarian Answer to the Modernist Question* that much British proletarian literature of the 1930s may be seen as a response to this 'modernist question' of the relationship between the 'I' and the 'we' and took the form, as suggested by West, of an expansion of modernist techniques and scope rather than a rejection of them.⁵

Biography and Experience

Both Gmeyner and Wied were born into middle-class Jewish families in Vienna, Gmeyner in 1902 and Wied in 1882. Both developed an early interest in literary writing and studied at University. Neither finished their degrees, both married and had one child while at the same time pursuing a writer's career. Already in this brief outline of their biographies we can see a clash of convention and rejection of such convention and an interest in how identity and belonging are represented or performed.

Gmeyner was the oldest of three daughters of the Viennese lawyer Rudolf Gmeyner and Louise Gmeyner. Rudolf Gmeyner was Jewish but did not practice his faith and neither did his wife, who had one Jewish parent. Anna Gmeyner herself was interested in Jewish identity in as much as it had an influence on a person's position in society and especially in view of changes occurring in Germany and Austria in the 1930s. She reflects this interest in *Manja* (1938) and *Café du Dôme* (1941), but she does not seem to have engaged in religious practice in her younger years. She was committed to left-wing political circles, which provided a different group identity. This commitment, of course, entailed opposition to the National Socialist doctrine.

Martina Wied's mother was Jenny Schnabl, a Jewish poet, and her father was Dr Joseph Schnabl, who converted to Judaism upon his marriage to her mother (a more unusual move than a wife converting to her husband's faith). Dr Schnabl was also a lawyer and

⁴ Sean Latham and Gayle Rogers, *Modernism: Evolution of an Idea*, London 2015, p.150.

⁵ Nick Hubble, *The Proletarian Answer to the Modernist Question*, Edinburgh 2017.

worked for the Finance Ministry in Vienna. Not much is known of the family's religious practice but Wied 'converted to Catholicism in her twenties',⁶ a move which left her with a dual, Judeo-Catholic heritage. This is reflected by her work, in which she portrays battles between the 'I' and the 'we', between complex individual and group identities. Literary culture and education were encouraged in her family; so, adopting the pseudonym Martina Wied, she wrote poetry even as a school girl, gained the 'Reifeprüfung' [higher education certificate] at a Vienna Lyceum, and started studying modern philology, philosophy, history and art history at the University of Vienna. She left university in 1910 in order to marry the company director Dr Siegfried Weisl, and on 11 March 1911 their only son Georg was born. After marriage and the birth of her son Wied continued to work both as a journalist and as a writer of fiction. She felt the tension between the desire to be a creative writer and the need to earn a living, especially in the economically difficult times of post-First World War Vienna and later after her husband's death. Her early career is especially associated with *Der Brenner*, a literary magazine founded in 1910 by Ludwig Ficker, which was quickly well established as a forum for literary criticism, avant-garde literature and expressionism. She also contributed to a variety of newspapers, such as the *Neue Freie Presse*, *Wiener Tagblatt*, *Wiener Zeitung*, *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* and the *Vossische Zeitung*.⁷ Wied was a successful writer, although her novels were first and foremost published in serialized form in newspapers. This publishing outlet ceased to exist for Wied in exile and her novels written and finished in Britain were all published in Austria after 1947.⁸

There is not a lot of information on Wied's migration story: obviously her Jewish background would have made her vulnerable to persecution after the Anschluss in 1938, but her involvement in avant-garde literature and her conservative Catholicism might also have made her a target for National Socialist persecution after the Anschluss. Apparently Wied's departure into exile was delayed by ill health and the desire to wait until her adult son had emigrated as well. Wied arrived in Britain on 9 March 1939. It appears that Britain was not intended to be her final destination and that she had hope to be able to migrate further to join her son in South America. As in the case of many refugees, this was made impossible by the

⁶ Audrey Milne, 'Martina Wied in Exile', unpublished DPhil thesis, University of Aberdeen, 1995, p. 8. See also Karl Markus Gauß, 'Wied, Martina' in Walter Killy (ed) *Literaturlexikon. Autoren und Werke deutsche Sprache* Band 12, Munich 1992, p.306; Wolfram Mauser, 'Wied, Martina' in Hermann Kunisch (ed), *Handbuch der deutschen Gegenwartsliteratur*. Band 2. Munich 1970, p.311.

⁷ Milne, 'Martina Wied in Exile', pp.10/11.

⁸ Brigitte Spreitzer, *TEXTUREN: Die österreichische Moderne der Frauen. Studien zur Moderne* 8, Vienna 1999, p.310-11.

outbreak of the Second World War. It is not known how she managed to obtain permission to enter the UK and how exactly she supported herself at the beginning of her exile.⁹

After initially enjoying the hospitality of fellow members of the Soroptomist Club, an international organization for professional women, in different locations in the UK, she stayed in a hostel in Glasgow. According to her autobiographical notes she then left Scotland for England on 25 April 1943, finding employment as a teacher in various private schools in England and Wales. Although Wied complained that her work as a teacher was hampering her literary production, she managed to finish the 600-page novel *Das Krähenest* between 1944 and 1945.

Anna Gmeyner's biography is also not easy to uncover; we can glean some information from an unpublished autobiographical text entitled 'A House with Two Doors',¹⁰ and various published scholarly studies. According to her autobiographical text she was not a conventional young woman; she showed an early commitment to social justice, took part in youth camps organized by the education reformer Eugenie Schwarzwald and read texts by Russian revolutionaries.¹¹ After briefly studying at university, she married the biologist Bertold Wiesner in 1924 and their only child, Eva, was born in 1925. Soon thereafter, the family moved to Berlin, which initially seemed like an exciting change: 'There was a brief interlude in the exciting climate of Berlin of these days, so different from the drifting, dreaming charm of backward looking Vienna.'¹² The family was not very well off and in order to earn money, Gmeyner wrote journalistic pieces as well as plays. When her husband was given the opportunity to continue his academic career in Edinburgh, Gmeyner followed him with Eva. Here she witnessed the General Strike of 1926, an experience she used for her play *Heer ohne Helden*, which was first performed in Berlin in 1930. Birte Werner argues that the performance of this play facilitated Gmeyner's recognition as a writer.¹³ However, her life stayed precarious, especially after she separated from her husband, who stayed in Scotland while Gmeyner lived in straightened circumstances with her daughter in Berlin. She knew various figures in the film industry and eventually started working for the film director Georg Wilhelm Pabst. When the National Socialists took over power in Germany in 1933, she was in Nice working on Pabst's film *Don Quixote* (1933). Gmeyner decided not to return

⁹ For a discussion of Martina Wied's biography, see *Andrea Hammel, Everyday Life as Alternative Space in Exile Writing: The novels of Anna Gmeyner, Selma Kahn, Hilde Spiel, Martina Wied and Hermynia Zur Mühlen*, Oxford 2008, p.127-129.

¹⁰ Anna Gmeyner, 'A House with Two Doors', unpublished manuscript, Collection Anna Gmeyner, Deutsches Filmmuseum [Deutsches Filmmuseum?], Berlin, [SDK].

¹¹ Birte Werner, 'Nachwort', in Birte Werner (ed), *Exildokumente: Café du Dôme von Anna Gmeyner*, Berne 2006, p. 401.

¹² Anna Gmeyner, 'A House with Two Doors', unpublished manuscript, Collection Anna Gmeyner, p. 14.

¹³ Birte Werner, 'Nachwort', p. 408.

to Berlin; there were reports that many friends, including the cast of one of her plays being performed at the time, had been arrested by the Gestapo. After a short interlude in Vienna, she settled in Paris, which was to become the European centre of this early exile period. Initially, things were going well for her as she had employment and an income, and she even employed a secretary to help her with her work: 'this was just the time when the first casualties arrived in Paris, musicians, scientists, actors',¹⁴ people who had to leave Germany because of National Socialism. These early exiles probably informed some of the characters in her novel *Café du Dôme*.

Exile experience and literary representation

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The main protagonists of both *Das Krähenest* and *Café du Dôme* are female refugees who reflect some of the authors' own experiences. Alexander Stephan states that '[n]ahezu alle Exilanten haben die Erfahrungen des Exils auf die eine oder andere Weise in ihren Werken verarbeitet.'¹⁵ [Nearly all exiles have used the experiences of exile in one way or another in their work.]¹⁶ However, although Anna Gmeyner lived in Paris as a refugee and Martina Wied worked as a teacher in British schools after her flight, this does not mean that the novels are autobiographical. Wied herself warns of a too literal identification of herself with the main character Madeleine: 'Zwar stecke ich in vielen meiner Gestalten drinnen, keine aber ist mein Selbstbildnis.'¹⁷ [I am a part of many of my characters, but none is my self-portrait.] Indeed, both Gmeyner's and Wied's novels and main characters are far too complex to be reduced to one single dimension. *Café du Dôme* and *Das Krähenest* both feature a range of other perspectives, mapping out complex social relationships and even different levels of reality as will be discussed below. This multi-perspectivale structure is part of the search for identity and belonging, for locating the 'I' amid the changing group identities.

Anna Gmeyner's earlier novel *Manja*, published by the exile publishing house Querido in Amsterdam in the German original in 1938 and in an English translation in 1939, had a very tight multi-perspective structure with four parts almost all containing eight chapters. It focuses on five children and their families, representing a cross-section of society according to class differences and religious backgrounds and is set between 1920 and 1934 in

¹⁴ Gmeyner, 'A House with Two Doors', p. 23.

¹⁵ Alexander Stephan, *Die Deutsche Exilliteratur 1933-1945*, Munich 1979, p. 163.

¹⁶ All translations from German to English are mine unless otherwise stated.

¹⁷ Wied, 'Jeder hat sein Grundmotiv. Ein Selbstportrait' in *Welt und Wort*, Vol. XVIII, 1953, p. 299.

Germany. The novel's narrative follows the families' changing position in society and shows what effect this has on the different family members. The five children, four boys and a girl, struggle to remain friends amid the political and societal changes. On the one hand, the novel was criticized for being too rigid and polemical and thus not possessing literary quality. On the other hand, the author was also reproached for not representing German society accurately as two of the children come from a Jewish background, which did not reflect the numerical representation of the Jewish population in Germany at the time and for not outlining the possibility of successful resistance to Fascism. I have discussed the reception of *Manja* in detail elsewhere and shown in my analysis of the novel that through portraying representation of everyday life Gmeyner is able to show the possibility of alternatives to fascism in literature at a time when many spaces for traditional expression of resistance seemed to be closed off.¹⁸

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Gmeyner develops her literary strategy to show different perspectives and the fragmentation and simultaneity of modern life in her later novel *Café du Dôme*, which was written in German but only published in an English translation by Trevor and Phyllis Blewitt in 1941. J.M. Ritchie suggests that the achievement of managing to sell a novel that needed to be translated to a British publisher, is proof of Gmeyner's success as a writer in exile in Britain.¹⁹ Today, only the English translation survives, the German original is lost. German-Jewish identity is shown as one of many subjectivities to be explored but it is not the overarching one.

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Das Krähenest was written during Wied's later years of exile between 1944 and 1945 and, as was the case for all her works written in the UK, was only published post-war after Wied returned to Austria on 15 September 1947. Wied does not seem to have had a problem with getting all her novels written during her exile published between 1948 and 1954 and the fact that she was the first woman writer who received the Österreichische Staatspreis für Literatur in 1952 shows that her work made a significant impact during the immediate post-war years in Austria.²⁰ However, in contrast to Gmeyner, her work was never 'rediscovered' during the later decades of the 20th century when exile writing became a more popular field for research. Jewish identity also hardly features in the narratives explicitly and thus those in search of forgotten Jewish representations were also unlikely to discover Wied. It can be argued that this lack of posthumous recognition might partially be due to the

¹⁸ Andrea Hammel, *Everyday Life as Alternative Space in Exile Literature*, p. 121.

¹⁹ J.M. Ritchie, 'Women in Exile in Great Britain' in *German Life and Letters*, Vol. XLVII, p.56.

²⁰ For a more detailed discussion, see Andrea Hammel, *Everyday Life as Alternative Space in Exile Literature*, p. 125-128.

complexity of Wied's novels. *Das Krähenest* is a 600 page novel and while the basic concept of a refugee teacher working in a boarding school in the UK is simple enough, there are many different narrative strands to contend with. The subtitle of the novel is 'Begebnisse auf verschiedenen Ebenen'. There are the three geographical locations, i.e. the actual boarding school called Krähenest which was evacuated to a rural location in the South West of England due to the war, Vevey in Switzerland where some of the main character's friends are in exile and Paris, where Madeleine's former lover still lives. However, there are many other kind of 'levels', defining different levels of consciousness such as dreams, different levels of reality such as the portrayal of a play being performed in the novel, and different genres being incorporated into the prose narrative such as radio broadcasts and letters. Some scholars have attempted to quantify the narrative on different levels,²¹ but this goes against the grain of a narrative that clearly shows fluidity. Here I will concentrate on a comparison of modernist tropes that are present in both novels.

Questioning reality

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In both novels questioning reality is important. *Café du Dôme* begins with a focus on the character, Nadia Schuhmacher, a Russian-born German-speaking refugee living in Paris, attempting to facilitate her husband's release from Dachau concentration camp. Peter Schuhmacher is portrayed as an active communist, and the novel focuses more on political exiles than on those who had to leave Germany because of their Jewish background, which is also consistent with the time span the narration is set in. Jewish identity or racial persecution are not accorded the same central attention as they were in the earlier novel *Manja*.²² Rather than the rigid multi-perspectivale structure of *Manja*, *-Café du Dôme* contains a number of perspectives, plots and sub-plots, which diverge and converge in a complex manner. The fluidity of the narrative can be seen as a development of Gmeyner's style and a reflection of the changing situations in Central Europe. While there is a certain logic in portraying the descent into National Socialist dictatorship in *Manja* (published in 1938) by representing the effects on working-class and middle-class families and Jews and Gentiles, many of these definitions had been challenged by exile. In *Café du Dôme* the characters are shown to have left behind the securities of their former lives, professional positions and communities. The

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²¹ See Hans Friedrich Prokop, 'Die Romane Martina Wieds', unfinished DPhil dissertation, University of Vienna, 1972. Also Audrey Milne, 'Wied in Exile'.

²² Anna Gmeyner, *Manja*, Mannheim 1984.

place where the different strands and characters come together is the Café du Dôme, which gives the novel its title. Historically, this café in the centre of Paris was known to be a meeting place for German intellectuals even before the First World War and remained so after 1933, when numerous refugees arrived from neighbouring Germany. Gmeyner herself uses the term ‘kaleidoscope’ in *Café du Dôme*, describing Nadia’s husband as ‘enjoying the kaleidoscopic life at the *Dôme*, with its sudden and fleeting glimpses into the lives and destinies of all kinds of people’.²³ Scholarly discussion has taken up this concept and discussed psychological and gender aspects,²⁴ but stopped short of analyzing the full aesthetic implications and placing these novels within a modernist debate.

Manja was discussed by critics in a number of exile periodicals after its publication, but not much is known about the reception of *Café du Dôme*. Gmeyner was referred to in George Lukács’s *Deutsche Literatur im Zeitalter des Imperialismus*, which confirms the writer’s impact at the time.²⁵ Lukács was critical of modernism, which he regarded as futile subjectivism lacking the necessary attention to society and history. Of modernists he says: ‘But both emotionally and intellectually, they all remain frozen in their own immediacy, they fail to pierce the surface to discover the underlying essence, i.e. the real factors that relate their experience to the hidden social forces that produce them.’²⁶

This criticism clearly does not hold for *Café du Dôme* as the novel situates subjectivity within history and society. On the opening page we meet Nadia who is sitting at a table in the café. The protagonist Nadia is introduced in the second person:

You had to touch the cold marble top to assure yourself who and where you were, to raise to your lips to the glass of *café crème* which you had been sipping very slowly and deliberately and to take another glance at the letters strewn about the table. You were Nadia Schuhmacher sitting at the table of the Café du Dôme.²⁷

The second person is rare in prose fiction, and is more often found in much later postmodernist works.²⁸ The narrative view point is not maintained throughout the novel or even the chapter but it surfaces at a number of occasions in the first chapter. It is clear that we

²³ Gmeyner, *Café du Dôme*, p. 144.

²⁴ See Andrea Hammel, *Everyday Life as Alternative Space in Exile Literature*, especially ‘Chapter Three: The Kaleidoscope of Exile: Gender Politics and Psychology’ pp. 123-196.

²⁵ George Lukács, *Deutsche Literatur im Zeitalter des Imperialismus*, Berlin 1945

²⁶ George Lukács, ‘Realism in the Balance’ in *Aesthetics and Politics*, London 1980, p. 36/37.

²⁷ Gmeyner, *Café du Dôme*, p.7.

²⁸ For example, Italo Calvino *On a Winter’s Night a Traveller*, transl. William Weaver, Turin 1979,

witness a negotiation of subjectivity and identity. The protagonist cannot know her 'I' until she touches the table, until she connects with her surroundings. This signifies her position as a refugee who suffers from insecurities in most areas of her life. 'You could sit here, alert and wide-awake, and yet at the same time be far away and shut up within yourself.'²⁹ It also signifies a modern view on consciousness and identity without ever losing sight of the historical situation. The paragraph that begins with 'You sit here' ends with the sentence 'And then there was that other thing. Not a word that passes from mouth to mouth, but something soundless, a gag in the mouth – Dachau.' Nadia Schuhmacher's husband is imprisoned in Dachau and she is about to write a letter to her sister in which she will state: 'No news from P.'³⁰

Café du Dôme introduces its readers to Paris during the 14 July Bastille Day celebration, successfully contrasting the celebrating crowds with Nadia's loneliness as well as contrasting the successful liberation of the French with the National Socialist dictatorship of the time and the banishment of the exiles from the homeland. Sabina Becker, in an article on 'Die literarische Moderne im Exil. Kontinuitäten und Brüche zur Stadtwahrnehmung', states that it is often suggested that exile writers found it difficult to portray city life or, more precisely: 'die Erfahrungen städtischer Wahrnehmungskategorien wie Bewegung, Dynamik, Simultaneität, Schnelligkeit und Fragmentarismus ästhetisch zu verarbeiten'³¹ [to portray aesthetically the experiences of urban perception such as movement, dynamism, simultaneity, speed and fragmentation]. Becker cites Klaus Mann's novel *Der Vulkan* as an example contradicting this general trend. *Café du Dôme* is another example of a novel that does portray the movement, simultaneity and fragmentation of the city. While the crowds move around to celebrate the liberation from the ancien regime, the exile Nadia sits in a cafe thinking of her imprisoned husband. This simultaneity opens up a spectrum of reality and unreality or alternative scenarios. Gmeyner writes that Nadia 'had an appointment with something that lay outside reality.'³² Much was written post-war about the difficulties describing the horror of the National Socialist persecution and eventually the difficulty of portraying genocide; this is anticipated in *Café du Dôme* when Nadia is asked if she thinks about her imprisoned husband all the time:

²⁹ Gmeyner, *Café du Dôme*, p.7.

³⁰ Gmeyner, *Café du Dôme*, p.11.

³¹ Sabina Becker, 'Die Literarische Moderne im Exil. Kontinuitäten und Brüche zur Stadtwahrnehmung' in Claus-Dieter Krohn, et al. (eds), *Metropolen des Exils. Exilforschung. Ein internationales Jahrbuch. Band 20*, Munich 2002, p. 47.

³² Gmeyner, *Café du Dôme*, p. 10.

No, often for hours not at all. Never while I am working, but always while I am enjoying myself. When I first came here, as long as things were grey and horrible, I got along. But then, spring in Paris! I used to give lessons to children of some friends in Neuilly who had a garden full of almond and cherry blossom – and that was ghastly. Do you know what I mean? The two things don't go together, almond blossom and Dachau.³³

During this chapter Nadia also meets Martin Schmidt, a fellow communist who knows her husband. Schmidt, 'who was not called Schmidt at all'³⁴, persuades her to leave the café and join in the Bastille Day celebration and here we see further evidence of Gmeyner's ability to show simultaneity and the movement of modern city life. Nadia and Martin go on a fairground roundabout 'In little ships suspended on silver chains the arms of young men were twined around the hips of squealing girls. [...] Nadia and Martin went soaring through the air in a red gondola with a blue keel. Faster and faster.'³⁵ Nadia ends up feeling motion-sick, which can be interpreted as acknowledging the challenges of a fast-paced moving world, especially under the traumatic historical circumstances of the time. *Das Krähenest* has a rural setting but this is penetrated by radio broadcasts and newspaper articles from Paris. This shows that the boundaries between different locations are being blurred in modern life.

Choices and the Doppelgänger

Eventually Peter Schuhmacher is released and joins Nadia in Paris but this leads to more tension and instability in Nadia's life instead of the anticipated happiness: Peter does not behave as convention would expect from a communist recently freed from a concentration camp. This strand of *Café du Dôme* becomes a thriller-like narrative of detection and the reader remains unsure whether Peter's strange behaviour is due to a form of post-traumatic stress or survivors' guilt or whether he is feeling guilty about an actual misdemeanor: 'He seemed somehow to be ashamed of himself, to be acting a part he had rehearsed.'³⁶ Again Gmeyner seems visionary as the concepts of post-traumatic stress or survivors' guilt were not well-known in the first half of the twentieth century. Peter never tells Nadia directly about how he escaped, she hears about it during a political rally, the story being told by someone

³³ Gmeyner, *Café du Dôme*, p. 11.

³⁴ Gmeyner, *Café du Dôme*, p.14.

³⁵ Gmeyner, *Café du Dôme*, p. 18/19.

³⁶ Gmeyner, *Café du Dôme*, p. 126

else, in French, a language that Peter does not speak well. Again, there is a double mediation and the reluctance to bear witness to traumatic experiences is hinted at. However, in the end the explanation is much more straightforward: to facilitate his release Peter had betrayed his communist comrades.

Both *Café du Dôme* and *Das Krähenest* feature this sort of betrayal and in both cases it is the partner or former partner of the main character that feels compelled to side with National Socialism. Ernest, the former lover of the main character Madeleine de la Tour-Madras in *Das Krähenest* turns out to be collaborating with the National Socialists in France. Both authors show the spectrum of possible positioning within the 1930s Central Europe political agenda. Another exile author, Hilde Spiel, explored a similar spectrum of choices in response to the political changes in Austria in a play entitled *Anna und Anna* by using a Doppelgänger motif. After the Anschluss Anna 1 goes into exile while Anna 2 stays in Austria. In *Café du Dôme* Peter collaborates with the National Socialists while communist comrade Martin remains steadfast, strictly adheres to doctrine and supports the fight against National Socialism. Nadia is attracted to both men but at the end of the novel's development she rejects a relationship with either and, although pregnant, separates from her husband, and decides to bring up the child without a male partner.

In Wied's *Das Krähenest*, Madeleine is torn between her admiration for the intellectual brilliance of Ernest and her rejection of his political choice. Ernest appears only mediated through letters, articles and other characters in Wied's narrative. An article entitled 'Lust am Verrat' [Lust for Betrayal] in the *Ausblick*, which is described as an anti-National Socialist journal, sets off Madeleine's trail of thought regarding Ernest. She recalls another article in the Nazi-friendly paper *Deutsch-Französische Rundschau*, which praised Ernest's choice and hailed him as a true representative of a new National Socialist France:

Wenn ein hoher Mensch wie Ernest unsere neue Ordnung als gerecht und erstrebenswert anerkennt, wenn er sich willig – ja hingerissen bereit zeigt uns sein Frankreich, worin er tiefer wurzelt als irgendeiner [...], nach Landschaft, Volkstum, Überlieferung und lebendig fortwirkenden Kräften, nach seiner staatlichen und persönlichen Eigenart genauer kennenzulehren, mehr, wenn er uns die geistigen – und die ungeistigen Voraussetzungen enthüllt, welche die politische Haltung seiner Volksgenossen hintergründen.³⁷

³⁷ Wied, *Krähenest*, pp.65/66.

[When a superior individual such as Ernest accepts the new order as just and desirable, when he is prepared – even enthusiastic to explain to us his France in which he is more deeply rooted than anyone else, according to landscape, ritual, tradition and lively enduring tradition even more when he is teaching us about the spiritual and other reasons for his fellow country men’s political attitude]

Besides being a political choice, the acceptance of National Socialism also means that a person does not have to leave his or her country of origin. Ernest argues that becoming a refugee and separating from one’s roots would have a detrimental effect on one’s physical and spiritual being, and that staying in France and collaborating is the preferable option: ‘das alles ist besser als ein heimatloser Flüchtling zu sein und das entsittlichende Leben des Exils zu führen’³⁸ [everything is better than being a homeless refugee and leading a life of exile bereft of morals]. Madeleine recalls her response in a past conversation on the topic: ‘man kann auch sein Vaterland verlieren, wenn man darin bleibt, und man kann es mit sich nehmen, überallhin’³⁹ [you can also lose your fatherland when you stay within it, and you can take it with you, wherever you go]. The complexity of the narrative, however, leads to a blurring of the views as well as the positions of the different characters.

Worries about rootlessness and lack of stability are expressed in more than one instance in *Das Krähenest*. The character Madeleine reflects on the different levels of reality in the narrative of the novel. She expresses the view that the different levels of reality are not a cause for celebration but a cause for concern: she calls the figure of the doppelgänger the ‘Ur-Angsttraum der Menschen’ [Ur-Angst dream, or fundamental nightmare of humanity]⁴⁰ referring to both her dreams about Ernest in Paris and about the performance of a play at the Krähenest boarding school. However, the novel’s development is clearly dependent on such topoi and it cannot be denied that there are playful moments in the narrative that marks the different levels of reality as well. For example, when Madeleine dreams that she is with Ernest and rebukes him for making rustling noises in the bedroom when she is trying to sleep but then dreams that he is actually with her and exclaims: ‘Raschle nur weiter, so viel du magst, daß du hier bist ist wunderbar!’⁴¹

³⁸ Wied, *Krähenest*, p. 69.

³⁹ Wied, *Krähenest*, p. 69.

⁴⁰ Wied, *Krähenest*, p. 182.

⁴¹ Wied, *Krähenest*, p.143.

Martina Wied's work – much more so than Gmeyner's – is generally recognized as part of the Austrian modernist movement. Brigitte Spreitzer discusses Wied's earlier novel *Kellingrath* in her monograph *TEXTUREN. Die österreichische Moderne der Frauen*. The main character in *Kellingrath* is the modern intellectual suffering from universal estrangement.

I have discussed the topic of exile as reality and exile as metaphor elsewhere and it is clear that there is a performative aspect to the homeless intellectual that enables writers to push boundaries but that exile is less pleasant to experience when one actually has to flee and seek refuge elsewhere.⁴² Both Wied and Gmeyner reflect this in the narratives of their novels and both writers are aware of the performative aspect of their position. It is thus significant that both novels feature the performance of an actual play.

Theatre and performance

In *Das Krähenest* a play is performed by the students: it is called 'Wartesaal' [Waiting Room], a topos that not only since Feuchtwanger's Wartesaal trilogy is closely connected with exile literature. In *Café du Dôme* Nadia is described as a 'woman waiting' and one of her friends uses her to model for a sculpture and gives it that title. The performance of the play in *Das Krähenest* hints of the performativity of the various roles the characters play in the novel. Almost all students at the boarding school are known only by their nicknames and many of these nicknames are names of Shakesperian characters. Some of the roles the students have been allocated in the play anticipate the events that are yet to happen at the school or facts that are yet to be revealed: one girl, Imogen, is acting out being a mother in the play, pushing a -pram with a doll. As readers we know that Imogen is having sex and that she might actually be pregnant. Wied's narrative provides no definite answers and as readers we constantly wonder about the reality of the situation. Additionally, all roles in the musical play have two students allocated to it: one performing the singing part, one performing the speaker part. Madeleine finds this strange and calls it a 'Gespenstertheater' [theatre of ghosts] and refers to it as uncanny: 'Merkt den hier niemand wie phantastisch – wie unheimlich diese Zweiteilung ist? Und wird keiner der Mitwirkenden vom Grauen vor seinem Doppelgänger befallen?'⁴³ [Does nobody here notices how fantastical – how uncanny this splitting up into two is. And is no one of the participants afraid of his Doppelgänger?].

⁴² Hammel, *Everyday Life as Alternative Space*, pp. 15-21.

⁴³ Wied, Kr

Here we have a performance of the Doppelgänger which is a reflection of the characters in a time of crisis and can be interpreted to reflect the exile situation but also the situation of an evacuated school in wartime.

In *Café du Dôme* we also find a play being performed at a party at the Schlesinger family's home. The Schlesinger family is one of the example of the cross-section of different refugee fates that is portrayed in the novel. The Schlesingers are a well-to-do Jewish family that has fled to Paris and was able to transfer their wealth to France. They are portrayed as very generous and supportive of more impoverished refugees and invite the refugee community to parties at their villa in a Paris suburb. At a party on the occasion of Herr Schlesinger's sixtieth birthday a play written by Walter Gabriel, a fellow refugee and formerly professional actor, is to be performed. The play contains badly written lines full of pathos and cannot be interpreted other than comical: 'Pigeons of St. Marks in this city of lagoons/ I just adore to feed you until you're little fat balloons.'⁴⁴ The real drama goes on behind the scenes: Gabriel is a misogynist who acts out his frustration arising from his loss of status in exile by treating Therese Schlesinger badly. Upset she faints during the play and when rebuked by Therese's mother -Gabriel melodramatically storms out of the house.

The presence of a plays in both novels exposes the different levels of reality and the performativity of the exile situation. Although going through the motions of work, family life, love and political struggle, nothing seems entirely real or stable. The characters feel there is another life they ought to be leading, the life they would have led had the National Socialists not gained power and driven them out. The possibility of such an existential choice has perhaps a specifically Austrian dimension. Austria was after all defined in the Moscow Declaration of 1943 as the first victim of Hitlerite aggression while it was clear to many international observers and to many enlightened Austrians that Austria had already been ruled by Austro-Fascists and that a large number of Austrians had welcomed German National Socialism and the Anschluss in March 1938. Thus Austria had to deal with the curious position of being on the side of the victims and on the side of the perpetrators at the same time more so than many other countries. In Britain the Free Austrian Movement (FAM) tried to emphasize the distinct nature of the Austrian state, and its democratic tradition and work for an independent Austrian future. It was an umbrella organization that included twenty-seven separate organizations with over 7,000 members joined to facilitate a free Austria after the end of the Second World War. Wied published a poem and a chapter from the manuscript

⁴⁴ Gmeyner, *Café du Dôme*, p. 247.

of *Das Krähenest* in an edition of the *Kulturelle Schriftenreihe des FAM* with the title 'Die Frau in der Österreichischen Kultur'. Gmeyner identified less with Austria; she read from *Manja* at an event organized by the Freie Deutsche Kulturbund, a German communist exile organization. Edward Timms terms discusses 'Austria's schizophrenic spiritual condition' in relation to another exile writer, Hilde Spiel.⁴⁵ On the one hand, Austria was invaded by another country, on the other hand many were clearly guilty of support for the Nazis and collaboration. The depiction of collaboration in both Wied's and Gmeyner's work can be seen as part of this discussion.

Both Ernest and Peter justify their collaboration by arguing partially that it is a way of obtaining the means to a higher end: Peter betrayed some of his Communist comrades to obtain freedom from the concentration camp, which means that he is now able to further his political cause in exile in Paris. Ernest collaborates with the National Socialists in France and by obtaining a position of influence he is able to aid Jewish French citizens and other persecuted individuals. *Café du Dôme* can also be read as a criticism of other political exile novels with a simplistic didactic message. Gmeyner's text is self-reflexive towards the position of the writer and literature and art as such. She was also aware of the limitations of a novel as a political tool and expressed self-irony in the text: when Peter threatens her with a gun, Nadia's thoughts identify the unreality of the situation: 'This was a caricature, exaggeration. This was what people did in bad films.'⁴⁶ Again the narrator comments on issues of reality: 'And quite suddenly and unexpectedly, just as a spring snaps back again, the scene snapped back into the plane of reality.'⁴⁷ This type of narrator's commentary as well as her stream-of-consciousness technique draw together the various levels of the novel to get a composite view of modern society in the context of the political situation of the time. Again the narration provides its own commentary on this:

It was all like a modern theatrical set: you saw a cross-section of houses in which people lived and died side by side, only the audience being privileged to see all the scenes at once, and the lights going on in one of the cells and going out in

⁴⁵ Edward Timms, 'Austrian Identity in a Schizophrenic Age: Hilde Spiel and the Literary Politics of Exile and Reintegration' in Kurt Richard Luther and Peter Pulzer (eds), *Austria 1945–1995. Fifty Years of the Second Republic*, Aldershot 1998, p. 63.

⁴⁶ Gmeyner, *Café du Dôme*, p. 379.

⁴⁷ Gmeyner, *Café du Dôme*, p. 379.

another. But here in the Dôme the production was rather different: everything happened all over the place and simultaneously.⁴⁸

This simultaneity is part of the modernism of Gmeyer's novel refuting the view that most novels with overt political messages are stylistically conservative. In the 21st century a small number of scholars have attempted to show that this is not the case for exile literature: Bettina Englmann examined the modernity of exile writing and Helga Schreckenberger's edited volume focussed on different aesthetic strategies of different authors.⁴⁹ However, neither work examine Anna Gmeyer or Martina Wied and their modernist aesthetics.

The modernist strategy of simultaneity is also important for Wied's *Das Krähenest*. If the novel was reduced to the level of the evacuated school and its staff, including the experiences of a French-Austrian exile, it would be able to illuminate the trials and tribulations of war time Britain and the difficult situation of someone who had to flee their homeland. By providing different levels which -connect, shift and realign, however, the structure opens up more debates and lets the reader experience alternative possibilities. It can even be argued that Wied toys with the idea of alternative histories by showing so many different positionings.

Alexander Stephan found – in his assessment of the exile novels of the time – that the exile theme did not lend itself to the construction of a narrative whole: 'ein geschlossengestaltetes Epos, das die historischen Entwicklungslinien des Exils herausgearbeitet hätte, ließ sich inmitten der unruhigen Jahre der Verbannung aber nur schwer herstellen'⁵⁰ [Amidst the confusing years of banishment it was very difficult to create a unified epic that would have included the developments of exile]. In fact he criticizes Lion Feuchtwanger's 'Wartesaal' trilogy for taking on the huge task of illuminating historical developments in Germany between 1914 and 1939. Stephan's verdict, however, can be seen as a commentary on the impossibility of thematizing the period in certain narrative styles rather than a criticism of Lion Feuchtwanger specifically: 'Eine Methode die Stoffmasse formal zu bewältigen, findet auch Feuchtwanger nicht.'⁵¹ [Feuchtwanger did not find a method to organize the mass of material.] Stephan therefore prefers the exile texts by Anna Seghers and Bertolt Brecht that do not attempt to create a complete meta-narrative: 'Statt dem

⁴⁸ Gmeyer, *Café du Dôme*, pp. 311/312.

⁴⁹ Bettin Englmann, *Poetik des Exils. Die Modernität der deutschsprachigen Exilliteratur*, Tübingen 2001; Helga Schreckenberger (eds), *Ästhetiken des Exils. Amsterdamer Beiträge zur neueren Germanistik* Band 54, Amsterdam 2003.

⁵⁰ Stephan, *Die Deutsche Exilliteratur*, p. 166.

⁵¹ Stephan, *Die Deutsche Exilliteratur*, p. 172.

formalen Chaos von Klaus Manns *Der Vulkan* und Lion Feuchtwangers *Exil* zu verfallen, erfassen sie die Wirnisse der Zeit in der modernen Form “kaleidoskophaft arrangierte Einzelepisoden”.⁵² [Instead of disintegrating into formal chaos like Klaus Mann’s *Der Vulkan* and Lion Feuchtwanger’s *Exil*, these novels manage to portray the chaos of the times in the modern form of ‘individual episodes arranged in a kaleidoscopic form’]. This is clearly what Wied and Gmeyner do as well: there is no metanarrative, possibilities and alternatives are offered and this technique also facilitates the exploration of gender identity in their novels.

Gender

The last three decades have seen a repeated investigation of gender and exile, and the academic field of Exile Studies in the UK has given this subject increasing attention.⁵³ This field of research is trying to negotiate a difficult tension between the recognition that the pressures of exile could be even more oppressive for women refugees while recognizing that flight and resettlement could also provide opportunities, especially for women refugees who might be freed from some of the conventions, restrictions and expectations of their originating societies.

Both novels portray this tension. In *Das Krähenest* the economic and employment difficulties of a woman refugee are shown. Madeleine’s employers are exploitative and adjust the individual teacher’s salary according to their desperation for getting a job. When Hermione, the female half of the couple running the school, finds a cheaper replacement, Madeleine is sacked without notice. The loss of status so keenly felt by many professional refugees comes to the fore when Hermione introduces Madeleine to Hermione’s son:

‘Mein Sohn Arthur – Madame Madrus, unsere neue Sprachlehrerin ...’ Der neue Titel ertönt Madeleine sonderbar erheiternd ins Ohr, die Comtesse de la Tour ist es nicht gewohnt mit ihrem Mädchennamen angesprochen zu werden; den Namen und Titel, den sie jetzt seit ungefähr zweiundzwanzig Jahren führt, hat sie bereits

⁵² Stephan, *Die Deutsche Exilliteratur*, p. 177.

⁵³ See for example, Claus-Dieter Krohn et al (eds), *Frauen im Exile zwischen Anpassung und Selbstbehauptung, Exilforschung. Ein Internationales Jahrbuch Band 11*, Munich 1993; Claus-Dieter Krohn et al (eds), *Sprache – Identität – Kultur. Frauen im Exile, Exilforschung. Ein Internationales Jahrbuch Band 17*, Munich 1999; Charmian Brinson and Andrea Hammel (eds), *Exile and Gender I: Literature and the Press. Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies*, Vol.17, Leiden and Boston 2016; Charmian Brinson, Jana Barbora Buresova and Andrea Hammel (eds), *Exile and Gender II: Politics, Education and the Arts: Yearbook of the Research Centre for German and Austrian Exile Studies*, Vol.18, Leiden and Boston 2017.

in mancherlei Zusammensetzungen gehört, in dieser noch nicht. Sprachlehrerin!
Bon, wer auf das Gehalt angewiesen ist, muß auch den Titel mit in Kauf nehmen,
und die schlechten Lebensformen der Leute, in deren Dienst man sich begeben
hat.⁵⁴

[‘My son Arthur – Madame Madrus, our new language teacher...’ The new title sounds amusing in Madeleine’s ear, the Comtesse de la Tour is not used to being addressed by her maiden name; she is used to hearing the name and the title which she had used for twenty-two years now in all sorts of combination, but not this one. Language teacher! Bon, if you are dependent on the salary, you have to get used to the title and the bad manners of the people you have agreed to be employed by.]

The injured pride of a refugee who had enjoyed higher status in society before emigration is a common trope. While the socio-historical assessment of the German-speaking refugees locates this inability to adjust largely with male refugees, and while women were said to be more adaptable,⁵⁵ Wied’s fictional narrative provides an added layer to the complexity of the problem. As an academic art historian Madeleine had been looking for a university lectureship, and had only accepted the less interesting and less well-paid position as a language teacher, when no lectureship could be obtained. This portrayal shows that the loss of status was a significant psychological factor for both men and women, although the latter were obviously less often to be found amongst the ranks of the professions. Wied’s narrative, however, also points to the complex intersection of social status and gender: a man would not have had a married name. Madeleine is shown to have become a [Comtesse](#) through marriage, and have enjoyed the aristocratic name and status in France. The exile strips her therefore of a layer of status, but it can be read in a way that it also releases her from a layer of dependence.⁵⁶ Madeleine Madrus, the refugee, is an independent woman, who prefers to endure the conditions of her employment at a British boarding school rather than being helped to gain a university lectureship in Switzerland by two male friends. We learn about this in a letter from her friend Pierre Julien Jalon who is part of the group of exiles in Vevey:

⁵⁴ Wied, *Krähenest*, p. 43.

⁵⁵ Marion Berghahn, ‘Women Emigres in England’ in Sybille Quack (ed.), *Between Sorrow and Strength: Women Refugees of the Nazi Period*, Cambridge University Press 1995.

⁵⁶ Andreas Lixl-Purcell points to the emancipatory potential of women’s lives in exile in his introduction to *Women of Exile: German-Jewish Autobiographies since 1933*, New York 1988.

Für mich liegt etwas Rührendes, etwas Erschütterndes in Ihrer Selbstverleugnung, aber ich erkenne sogleich auch ihre Gefahr. Sie dieser zu entziehen, möchte ich Sie bitten, eine Schweizer Einreiseerlaubnis, die ich unschwer für Sie erwirken kann, anzunehmen. Und gewiß wird sich dann auch für die Verfasserin des Monumentalwerks über die 'Französischen Bildteppiche des Mittelalters' ein Universitätslehramt finden.⁵⁷

[For me there is something moving, but also unsettling in your self-denial but I also recognize the danger. To remove yourself from danger I would like to ask you to accept the Swiss entry permit, that I can easily obtain for you, And surely a university lectureship will then be found for the author of the monumental work on the 'French Tapestries of the Middle Ages'.]

Madeleine rejects this offer and this can be interpreted as an emancipatory act, especially since the narrative of the letter provides such a patronizing introduction. Madeleine is shown as independent of her former lover, her old friends, as well as of her new acquaintances at the school. The different levels of the narrative make this choice more obvious and provide a nuanced range of possibilities.

Gmeyner, too, manages a successful narrative portrayal of this development towards independence. Not only does she show in *Café du Dôme* the kaleidoscopic nature of life in exile with its many facets, she also manages to draw the various strands of the novel together, especially those concerning gender relationships and, even more than Wied, she is able to subvert and challenge conventions. As in her earlier novel *Manja*, motherhood is an area of transgressing boundaries and transformative change. Nadia Schuhmacher's husband Peter has the conventional views of a male chauvinist revolutionary towards having children: 'Children make men reactionary and women fat',⁵⁸ thus -reducing women to beautiful accessories of revolutionary men.

When Nadia becomes pregnant at the end of the novel she rejects Peter and decides to bring up her child without him but with the help of her female friend Irene. Bringing up a child without a father is shown as the preferred option and as Irene states, a child 'belongs to

⁵⁷ Wied, *Das Krähenest*, p.153.

⁵⁸ Gmeyner, *Café du Dôme*, p. 277.

us alone, it's our business, not theirs.'⁵⁹ The traditional happy ending of the romantic novel, according to which Nadia would get together with another man, such as the steadfast communist Martin, is rejected. These are strong indicators that *Café du Dôme*'s aim is to show the possibility of alternatives to existing societal structures.

Gmeyner's alternative scenarios include the possibility of physical attraction between women. She subverts the conventional feminine setting of a beauty salon into a space for mental and physical intimacy between Nadia and Irene. While assessing their different lives and giving each other advice about their relationships with men, the possibility of physical attraction between women is also present: 'It gave Nadia pleasure to gaze upon the beauty of Irene's tall faultless body as she strode indolently to the door.'⁶⁰ Although Irene explicitly states that she is not a lesbian, albeit with regret – 'a thousand pities I have no lesbian tendencies'⁶¹ – the possibility of an alternative to heterosexual relationships is clearly open in the narrative.

Jane Marcus, in her essay 'Alibis and Legends: The Ethics of Elsewhereness, Gender and Estrangement', states that it is her task to understand 'the ethics of the woman writer's elsewhereness. For elsewhere is not nowhere. It is a political place where the displaced are always seen and see themselves in relation to the "placed"'.⁶² Writers like Anna Gmeyner and Martina Wied can be positioned in this other space, as exiles and as women writers from a Jewish background. Both novels were written during the Second World War when the political landscape in Europe lacked alternative visions. While reflecting the political situation of the time, there are glimpses of Utopian alternatives, especially connected to Nadia and her friend Irene in *Café du Dôme*. This can be related to Frederic Jameson's discussion of how Utopian writing operates:

The fundamental dynamic of any Utopian politics (or of any political Utopianism) will therefore always lie in the dialectic of Identity and Difference, to the degree to which such a politics aims at imagining, and sometimes even at realising, a system radically different from this one.⁶³

⁵⁹ Gmeyner, *Café du Dôme*, p. 309.

⁶⁰ Gmeyner, *Café du Dôme*, p. 185.

⁶¹ Gmeyner, *Café du Dôme*, p.182.

⁶² Jane Marcus, 'Alibis and Legends: The Ethics of Elsewhereness, Gender and Estrangement' in Mary Lynn Broe and Angela Ingram (eds), *Women's Writing in Exile*, Chapel Hill and London 1989, p. 270.

⁶³ Frederic Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future. The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*, London 2005, p. xii.

Both *Das Krähenest* and *Café du Dôme* are modern novels that explore identity and difference but whereas Wied's novel succeeds in showing the complex dynamics of social, political and artistic changes at the time, Gmeyner, the younger author of the two, manages to draw into this mix glimpses of Utopian politics and of the society that was to develop after the Second World War.

Neither Anna Gmeyner's *Café du Dôme* nor Martina Wied's *Das Krähenest* are mentioned in the early overviews of exile literature such as Alexander Stephan's *Die Deutsche Exilliteratur 1933-1945*, which was first published in 1979. The two women writers' discovery is part of a much later trend to rectify the neglect of women's exile writing and to move away from a narrow canon of established figures.

Despite a large number of books written by refugee authors, Alexander Stephan feels that there is a lack of significant works covering the 'exile' experience: 'Trotzdem fehlt es der Exilliteratur an bedeutenden Büchern zum Thema Exil'⁶⁴ [Nevertheless exile literature lacks significant works with an exile theme]. Stephan argues that Lion Feuchtwanger's and Heinrich Mann's most famous works do not deal with the exile theme. Other books such as Vicki Baum's *Hotel Shanghai* or Erich Maria Remarque's *Arc de Triomphe* managed to reach a larger audience, but were deemed to be of inferior quality: 'literarische Bedeutung besaßen sie nicht' [they did not have any literary significance].⁶⁵ This assessment seems to be based on an outmoded view of what constitutes literature.

As we have outlined before, Wied certainly received recognition as a significant Austrian writer by receiving the 'Österreichische Staatspreis für Literatur' in 1952.⁶⁶ Whereas other exile novels such as Anna Gmeyner's *Manja* were literally forgotten for nearly fifty years, Wied's brief but official prominence seems to have initiated a different approach to her work. Brief analyses of *Das Krähenest* can, for example, be found in overviews such as Werner Welzig's *Der deutsche Roman im 20. Jahrhundert*⁶⁷ and Roland Heger's *Der österreichische Roman des 20. Jahrhunderts*.

Gmeyner was rediscovered by the publisher Lisette Bucholz who had committed herself to publish forgotten exile literature in her persona Verlag. After finding and admiring the text of *Manja*, Bucholz placed a search notice in the journal of the Association of Jewish Refugees asking for information on the author and Gmeyner was found living in a home for

⁶⁴ Stephan, *Die Deutsche Exilliteratur*, p. 164.

⁶⁵ Stephan, *Die Deutsche Exilliteratur*, p. 165.

⁶⁶ Stephan, *Die Deutsche Exilliteratur*, p. 39.

⁶⁷ Werner Welzig, *Der deutsche Roman im 20. Jahrhundert*, Stuttgart 1970, pp. 176/177; Roland Heger, *Der österreichische Roman des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Vienna 1970, p. 61.

older people outside York. *Manja* was first republished in 1984. The manuscript of *Café du Dôme* was then re-published after Gmeyner's death in the series *verboten – verbrannt – vergessen* by Peter Lang with support from Anna Gmeyner's daughter, the British author Eva Ibbotson, well known for her successful children's literature. This means that Anna Gmeyner was rediscovered as an exile writer but is often not recognized as a modernist writer even though her novels fit very well into more recent discussions such as Nick Hubble's focus on proletarian modernist works that are not defined by the class position of their author.

Martina Wied's work, however, enjoyed short-lived prominence during the postwar period but was never republished, even when exile literature was the focus of increased research attention. Maybe a contributing factor to this development was the fact that some overviews of Wied's exile novels neglect to mention significant biographical facts such as her flight to Britain. To us now, the way that Roland Heger describes the circumstances surrounding the sequence in which Wied's exile novels were published as 'biographische Zufälle' [biographical coincidences] sounds like historical revisionism.⁶⁸ And the fact that Werner Welzig mentions in his entry that Wied wrote *Das Krähenest* in England (which is not entirely correct as she finished it in Wales), but does not give any details of her flight from Austria to Britain, is politically suspect and a way to eradicate the political, human and artistic consequences of National Socialism.

Wied was certainly ambitious and had hoped to be a nationally recognized author and was thus keenly aware of her loss when she had to flee Austria. In a letter to the *Brenner* editor Ludwig Ficker in 1939 she wrote:

Denn nun, da ich alles verloren habe: Gatten, Sohn, die gesicherte Existenz, das Heim und die Heimat, das bürgerliche Ansehen, das ich von meinen Vorfahren ererbt und übernommen – das geistige und menschliche Ansehen, welches ich mir selbst erworben habe, die Hoffnung, einmal im Schrifttum meiner Nation einen dauernden Platz zu finden, ja diese Nation und die Muttersprache [...].⁶⁹

[As I have now lost everything, husband, son, the secure existence, a home and the Heimat, the respect derived from my position and my ancestors, the spiritual

⁶⁸ Heger, *Der österreichische Roman*, p.60.

⁶⁹ Letter, Martin Wied to Ludwig Ficker, 26 November 1939, in Zangerele et al., *Ludwig von Ficker, Briefwechsel*, [give full publication details!] p. 330.

and human respect that I have worked for, the hope that I might gain a place in the literature of my country, my nation and my language]

Both using a restrictive pigeonholing into the segregated area of exile literature as well as denying the fact that an author had to flee Austria is an inadequate response to the works by either writer. My aim has been to show that Anna Gmeyner and Martina Wied responded to the challenges of their time by employing innovative modernist techniques that allow their works to be placed at the heart of the expanding field of 'modernisms'. I have discussed how their biographies are important when analyzing their work without being the only consideration or even the most important consideration. I have examined the ways they reflected the instability of their time by creating different levels of reality and showing alternative possibilities to convention. I have explored the performativity of these alternative narratives. In their work, subjectivity is interlinked with material and political contexts, as their protagonists map out new ways of living, even from the position of political catastrophe and exile.